

The English Department Students' Perceptions of the Difficulties in Comprehending Academic English Lectures at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University

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Abstract

Academic lectures are one of the areas that university students encounter most often. Comprehending these lectures is crucial for English language learners. In order to bring about more effective and inclusive learning experience, an understanding to the difficulties facing the English department students should be provided. This study aims at acquiring an in-depth understanding of the difficulties and challenges that female students in the English department at Prince Sattam Bin Abdelaziz University face, from their own unique perspective, while listening to English lectures. Participants were undergraduate female students in the English department at Prince Sattam Bin Abdelaziz University (n= 112) who randomly responded to a twenty five multiple choice online questionnaire and one open-ended question. The study examined two types of difficulties; linguistic and non-linguistic. Those difficulties were categorised according to two variables; the students' level and GPA. A mixed-method research design was adopted and a quantitative and qualitative data collection methods were employed during the first semester of the academic year 1440-1441. Findings indicated that students' difficulties in relation to the linguistic factors were at a high level whereas difficulties related to the non-linguistic factors were at a medium level. In light of the study findings, recommendations and implications were presented.

Keywords: Academic lecture, Students' Perceptions, Difficulties, Linguistic factors, Non-linguistic Factors, Comprehending

1. Introduction

Academic listening is one of the essential skills in higher education and it has many forms such as lecture-comprehension, participating in tutorial exchanges, receiving instructions in a laboratory, discussing topics with classmates, and during consultation sessions with professors (Miller, 2014). Lectures are one of the areas that university students encounter most often. Miller defines lectures as a way of transmitting information to a large group of students. The purpose of academic lectures is “to teach content matter and to have information presented, understood and remembered” (Huang, 2005, p. 555). Academic English is different from everyday English in its underlying rhetorical structure (MacDonald, Badger, & White, 2000). Chaudron (1995) pointed out that academic speech has a planned content and delivery, and it has unique characteristics from written or spoken form.

Nonnative speakers difficulties in lecture comprehension are not only attributed to the sentence-level linguistic inadequacies but rather to the discourse level of English lectures (Morrison, 1974). Of the various factors impacting language learning are the linguistic factors which are related to the language being learned, and the non-linguistic factors that are related to the conditions in which learners are learning the English language. During English lectures, students can employ a range of strategies in order to facilitate these difficulties. Strategies are “the special thoughts or behaviours that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information” (O’Malley & Chamot, 1990:1). These strategies include metacognitive which involves thinking about the listening process, planning for listening, monitoring listening whilst taking place, applying specific procedures to a listening task. Socio-affective strategies involve the techniques that listeners employ for interacting with others (teachers and peers) to verify comprehension and reducing anxiety (Flowerdew and Miller 2005). Unfortunately, Listening to academic English lectures is one of the topics that has been rarely investigated (Carrier, 1999; Buck, 2001; Chen, 2005). The need for further systematic research has been pointed out by a number of researchers (Mendelsohn, 1998; Siegel, 2014). Hence, the present study intends to shed light on this area: female EFL college students’ perceptions of the difficulties in comprehending academic English lectures.

1.1 Significance of the Study

The significance of the study arises from the fact that it is based on a premise that the findings derived from this research will yield insights to reinforce learning and teaching process, as well as curriculum planning at the English department in Prince Sattam bin Abdelaziz University. In other words, this study is expected to raise awareness of the difficulties and challenges that undergraduate female students at the English department in Prince Sattam Bin Abdelaziz University face so that improvements can be made. Moreover, the study is of a great importance since it will contribute to the literature and the results of the study may be of assistance to other departments in Prince Sattam bin Abdelaziz University or to other universities .

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The study aims at acquiring an in-depth understanding of the difficulties and challenges that female students in the English department at Prince Sattam Bin Abdelaziz University face, from their own unique perspective, while listening to academic English lectures. The findings of the study will contribute in raising awareness of students' comprehension difficulties so that improvements can be made.

1.3 Research Questions

The study focuses on the following questions:

- 1- What are the English department students' perception of the linguistic difficulties they face in comprehending academic lectures at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University?
- 2- What are the English department students' perception of the non-linguistic difficulties they face in comprehending academic lectures at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University?
- 3- Does the students' level affect the linguistic and non-linguistic difficulties facing the English department students in comprehending academic lectures at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University?
- 4- Does the students' GPA affect the linguistic and non-linguistic difficulties facing the English department students in comprehending academic lectures at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University?

1.4 Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to the English department undergraduate female students at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University in the academic year 1440 - 1441. It is also confined to only 14.8 % of the department students who were able to take part in this study.

1.5 Educational Background

Education in Saudi Arabia is obligatory and free for all population. The Saudi Ministry of Education has declared in its education policy documents that Arabic is the medium of instruction in public education settings unless necessity dictates otherwise. In 1937, English was first offered in Saudi schools and was regarded as a foreign language until today. Nowadays, English is taught in schools for four times a week (45 min each session) in grades 4, 5 and 6 of elementary school (Alhawsawi, 2016), and is taught in all grades of the intermediate and the secondary schools for four times a week (45 min each session).

The English Department in Prince Sattam bin Abdelaziz University was founded in 1429 as a main department in the college of sciences and humanities. Its vision believes in the importance of contributing to the process of construction in the Kingdom by training graduates to employ their English language skills in communication and to fulfill the requirements of public and private employment sectors, in addition to promoting scientific research at the university and in society. Students are awarded a BA in English Language and Literature by completing a comprehensive four-year program. The study plan of the program includes courses covering language skills, linguistics and literature, in addition to courses in translation studies. All the students in the English department must have graduated from

secondary school with an excellent GPA and they must have fulfilled the department entry requirements.

2. Research Method

The study adopted a mixed-method research design and employed quantitative and qualitative data collection methods during the first semester of the academic year 1440-1441.

2.1 Participants of the Study

The targeted sample is the undergraduate female students in the English department at Prince Sattam Bin Abdelaziz University. Participants were selected randomly from different levels and different GPA in the department. The selected sample involved a total of 112 undergraduate female students in the English department at Prince Sattam Bin Abdelaziz University who constituted 14.8 % of the department students ($n= 758$) in the academic year 1440 - 1441. All participants are native speakers of Arabic and have studied English as a school subject for at least six years.

2.2 Study Instrument

After extensively surveying the literature, the study instrument which is an online questionnaire was adapted from a study by (Al-Nouh and Abdul-Kareem, 2017) and developed by the researcher to suit the study context (appendix A). The questionnaire consists of (25) multiple choices statements and one open ended question. It starts with two questions to solicit information about student's level and GPA .The (25) statements were divided into two subsections: the difficulties related to the linguistics factors (14 items) and the difficulties related to non-linguistic factors (11 items). The last question asks participants to comment on the problems and difficulties which they may have personally experienced in case a certain area of difficulty may have been overlooked. For participants' perceptions, a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree is used. Later, the instrument was piloted on a small scale group to amend its final draft.

2.3 Pilot Study

Prior to the actual study, a pilot study was conducted on a group of (15) participants. The purpose of it was to judge the validity and reliability of the instrument in order to improving it. The study questionnaire was modified according to participant's feedback. It was then face validated by two experts in the field . Pearson Correlation coefficient was used to calculate the validity which was of an acceptable level. Data were processed with the statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) software, version 18 for Windows. The correlation coefficient between each item and the total score as well as between each factor and the total score was less than (0.01) (Table.1). A Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient (more than 0.60) has been recorded showing a high level of reliability of the scale. (Table .2).

Table 1. Pearson Correlation coefficient

	Linguistic Factors		Non-Linguistic Factors
1	.804**	15	.838**
2	.915**	16	.911**
3	.899**	17	.938**
4	.687**	18	.887**
5	.676**	19	.862**
6	.835**	20	.854**
7	.884**	21	.927**
8	.912**	22	.911**
9	.923**	23	.972**
10	.817**	24	.886**
11	.804**	25	.838**
12	.819**		
13	.778**		
14	.764**		

Table 2. Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient

Alpha Cronbach	ofNumber statements		
.963	14	Linguistic Factors	1
.974	11	Non-Linguistic Factors	2
.925	25	factoresAll	3

2.4 Ethical Considerations

Prior to any data collection, approval was attained from the questionnaire author in order to use it in this study with some modifications to suit the study context. The introductory part of the questionnaire stated the participants right in participating anonymously, confidentially and with no risks associated. They were also informed that they may withdraw from the study at any time.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Sample Description

Participants in this study were classified according to two variables; level and GPA. Results showed that the largest frequency were from level (3 & 4) followed by level (5 & 6) and finally level (1& 2) and level (7 & 8) by equal frequencies. Based on the GPA variable, the

below table reported that most participants had a GPA ranging between (4 - 5) in contrast to (below 2) which scored the least of the total number of participants. (Table.3)

Table 3. Sample Description based on (Level & GPA)

Level	below 2		2 - 2.99		3 - 3.99		4 - 5		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1&2	5	4.5%	3	2.7%	5	4.5%	8	7.1%	21	18.8%
3&4	2	1.8%	9	8.0%	10	8.9%	26	23.2%	47	42.0%
5&6	3	2.7%	3	2.7%	8	7.1%	9	8.0%	23	20.5%
7&8	0	0.0%	2	1.8%	10	8.9%	9	8.0%	21	18.8%
Total	10	8.9%	17	15.2%	33	29.5%	52	46.4%	112	100.0%

3.2 Date Analysis

3. 2.1 Difficulties in Understanding Academic Lectures in Relation to Linguistic Factors

Frequencies, means, percentage, standard deviation, ranking and grades have been established to analyse the data. The below table reported that ten out of fourteen items reflecting linguistic difficulties were in high grade (M= 3. 40 to less than 4.20) whereas the other four items were in medium grade (M= 2. 60 to less than 3.40). This shows that respondents are encountering real linguistic problems when it comes to understanding academic English.

Table 4. Difficulties in understanding academic lectures in relation to linguistic factors

No	Difficulties		Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	Std. D	Ranking	Grade
1	I can't understand the lecture if the instructor speaks fast.	F	37	32	29	9	5	3.78	1.129	3	High
		%	33.0	28.6	25.9	8.0	4.5				
2	I need the instructor to repeat the information as it gives me more time to process it.	F	44	35	21	8	4	3.96	1.094	2	High
		%	39.3	31.3	18.8	7.1	3.6				
3	I have difficulty understanding the vocabulary during English lectures.	F	30	34	27	15	6	3.60	1.174	7	High
		%	26.8	30.4	24.1	13.4	5.4				
4	I can't understand most of the main points and theories of a	F	13	31	37	25	6	3.18	1.076	12	Medium
		%	11.6	27.7	33.0	22.3	5.4				

	lecture.										
5	I don't have enough vocabulary to help me understand academic English.	F	28	31	26	21	6	3.48	1.208	9	High
		%	25.0	27.7	23.2	18.8	5.4				
6	I don't have enough vocabulary to help me speak academic English.	F	30	40	24	15	3	3.71	1.088	5	High
		%	26.8	35.7	21.4	13.4	2.7				
7	English usage is limited as we do not speak English outside the classroom.	F	59	26	19	4	4	4.18	1.067	1	High
		%	52.7	23.2	17.0	3.6	3.6				
8	I find it difficult to understand the instructor's pronunciation.	F	26	26	37	20	3	3.46	1.114	10	High
		%	23.2	23.2	33.0	17.9	2.7				
9	I understand the words but not the intended message.	F	24	29	27	22	10	3.31	1.259	11	Medium
		%	21.4	25.9	24.1	19.6	8.9				
10	I don't know the right pronunciation of most of the words that I know.	F	15	22	40	26	9	3.07	1.137	14	Medium
		%	13.4	19.6	35.7	23.2	8.0				
11	I know the pronunciation of the word, but I forget what the word means.	F	31	36	28	14	3	3.70	1.089	6	High
		%	27.7	32.1	25.0	12.5	2.7				
12	My knowledge of grammar doesn't help me in understanding the lectures.	F	24	21	29	23	15	3.14	1.335	13	Medium
		%	21.4	18.8	25.9	20.5	13.4				
13	When sentences get longer, I lose the meaning of what is said.	F	34	33	30	12	3	3.74	1.088	4	High
		%	30.4	29.5	26.8	10.7	2.7				
14	When I listen to a lecture, I can't guess the meaning of new words.	F	36	25	23	24	4	3.58	1.242	8	High
		%	32.1	22.3	20.5	21.4	3.6				
	Total							3.56	0.700		High

As illustrated in table 4, more than half of the proportion agreed strongly on the limited usage of English outside the classroom. It is verified that failure to language acquisition is mainly attributed to lack of exposure to the second language. In addition, Around 39.3 % of respondents confirmed the need for the instructor to repeat the given information as they might not fully comprehend it from the first time. This, of course, reflects students' weak language skills. With regard to comprehending lecture theories and main points, we can tell from the table that the majority of participants were not sure about this point as 33% were undecided. Vocabulary constitutes an essential weakness for non-native speakers and this is supported by the students responses to statements (3,5 and 6). Where vocabulary is

concerned, the largest proportion agreed on facing difficulties in understanding, comprehending and speaking academic vocabulary. Although participants responses to difficulties in understanding the instructors' pronunciation were in grade high, their responses to their knowledge of pronunciation to words were medium. Participants lack of exposure to the English language is shown in their responses to statements (13 and 14) as they lose attention when the sentence gets longer and in the way that 32% of respondents cannot predict meanings of new vocabulary. Results of the difficulties related to linguistic factors suggest further consideration to this problem by students themselves and by decision makers in the department.

3.2.2 Difficulties in understanding academic lectures in relation to non-linguistic factors

The non-linguistic factors were measured similarly and result analysis were reported in (Table5). Only one difficulty item was in the grade (very high) with means ranging between (4. 20 to less than 5.00). Four items were in the grade (high) with means ranging between (3. 40 to less than 4.20). The other four were in the grade (medium) with means ranging between (2. 60 to less than 3.40). Only two difficulties were in the grade (low) with means ranging between (1. 80 to less than 2.60). Thus, the overall grade for the non-linguistics factors is (medium).

Table 5. Difficulties in understanding academic lectures in relation to non-linguistic factors

No	Difficulties		Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	Std. D	Ranking	Grade
15	I forget what I hear quickly because of so many new information at once.	F	40	47	14	10	1	4.03	0.963	2	High
		%	35.7	42.0	12.5	8.9	0.9				
16	The instructor's style in lecturing is de-motivating for the student.	F	24	24	36	18	10	3.30	1.229	6	Medium
		%	21.4	21.4	32.1	16.1	8.9				
17	I find it hard to concentrate when the lecture is late.	F	73	16	11	6	6	4.29	1.174	1	Very High
		%	65.2	14.3	9.8	5.4	5.4				
18	I feel shy to ask the instructor during the lecture.	F	30	32	25	22	3	3.57	1.160	4	High
		%	26.8	28.6	22.3	19.6	2.7				
19	I can't take notes freely during the lecture.	F	28	32	24	20	8	3.46	1.244	5	High
		%	25.0	28.6	21.4	17.9	7.1				
20	When the instructor talks, she/he doesn't write on the board.	F	21	29	33	15	14	3.25	1.263	7	Medium
		%	18.8	25.9	29.5	13.4	12.5				
21	The instructor doesn't summarize the main points at the end of the lecture.	F	39	28	25	16	4	3.73	1.185	3	High
		%	34.8	25.0	22.3	14.3	3.6				

22	The instructor doesn't ask questions during the lecture to check comprehension.	F	7	13	32	38	22	2.51	1.123	10	Low
		%	6.3	11.6	28.6	33.9	19.6				
23	The instructor doesn't give examples to explain the main points of the lecture.	F	15	13	37	28	19	2.79	1.246	8	Medium
		%	13.4	11.6	33.0	25.0	17.0				
24	The instructor doesn't allow students to participate in the lecture	F	4	6	29	41	32	2.19	1.027	11	Low
		%	3.6	5.4	25.9	36.6	28.6				
25	The instructor doesn't give detailed explanation of the lecture content.	F	14	8	39	32	19	2.70	1.207	9	Medium
		%	12.5	7.1	34.8	28.6	17.0				
Total								3.26	0.725		Medium

Table 6. The means for the Linguistic Factors and Non-Linguistic Factors

No	Difficulties	Mean	Std. D	Ranking	Grade
1	Linguistic Factors	3.56	0.700	1	High
2	Non-Linguistic Factors	3.26	0.725	2	Medium
3	All Difficulties	3.41	0.622		High

From the above table we can deduce that one of the significant non-linguistic problems encountered participants during English lectures was late lectures time (statement 17) which received a great consensus by more than half of the participants who strongly agreed on this statement . Clearly, This is the only problem which scored (very high) grade in the whole study. Additionally, another major problem was related the amount of information given at once by 35.7% strongly agree and 42% agree which altogether constitute about 78% of the whole participants. Students attitudes in the lectures like taking notes or asking questions scored high grades which indicates a serious problem in fitting in the university atmosphere that requires students' further discussions with the instructor and continuous note taking . With respect to instructors teaching methods, four statements (16, 20 , 23 and 25) scored medium grade and two scored low (22 and 24) . In contrast, respondents demand for summarising the main point was high as summaries assist in verifying important concepts in the lecture. In addition, Most participants disagreed on the statements about instructors allowing students to be engaged in lecture discussions by asking them some questions or enabling them to participate which suggests that instructors in the English department at Prince Sattam bin Abdelaziz University have good communication skills with their students. In contrast, most participants were undecided if the instructors' style in lecturing is demotivating for them. This was asserted in their answers to the open-ended question where many of them had complains about the boring lectures style and the lack of use of new

teaching methods. As approved in Bajak (2014) study that traditional lecturing is ineffective at promoting the learning process. To conclude, findings of the study emphasise that students in the English department have major difficulties in understanding academic English lectures. Students perceptions towards the non-linguistic factors recorded medium rating in contrast to the linguistic factors which were high. (Table. 6)

3.2.3 The Effect of Students University Level on the Linguistic and Non-linguistic Difficulties

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine whether the results vary according to the study variables; level and GPA. Means were compared by LSD-test to check significant difference.

Table 7. ANOVA Test for the the effect of students university level on the linguistic and non-linguistic difficulties

Difficulties	variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Linguistic Factors	Between Groups	5.116	3	1.705	3.735	.013
	Within Groups	49.310	108	.457		
	Total	54.426	111			
Non-Linguistic Factors	Between Groups	1.237	3	.412	.780	.508
	Within Groups	57.097	108	.529		
	Total	58.334	111			

With respect to the study question as whether university level has any effects in the linguistic and non- linguistic difficulties facing the English department students at Prince Sattam bin Abdelaziz University, results were tabulated in the above table (Table.7). The findings detected significant differences between levels in the linguistic difficulties only. However, there were not any differences in the non-linguistic factors which suggests that all students had non-linguistic difficulties regardless of their level. Difference analysis are displayed in the below table (Table. 8).

Table 8. LSD Test for the the effect of students university level on the linguistic difficulties

Difficulties	Level	Mean	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8
Linguistic Factors	1-2	3.74				.51361 [*]
	3-4	3.73			.35377 [*]	.49855 [*]

	5-6	3.37				
	7-8	3.23				

According to the LSD test, the significant differences in the linguistic difficulties were detected as follows :

- Between level (1-2) and level (7-8) students. The former group had more linguistic difficulties according to their means scores.
- Between level (3-4) and level (5-6) students. The former group had more linguistic difficulties according to their means scores.
- Between level (3-4) and level (7-8) students. The former group had more linguistic difficulties according to their means scores.

Clearly, the most linguistic difficulties were encountered by level (1 and 2) and level (3 and 4) , respectively ($M = 3.74$, 3.73). The least linguistic difficulties were found in students in level (7 and 8) ($M = 3.23$) .

3.2.4 The Effect of Students University GPA on the Linguistic and Non-linguistic Difficulties

Table 9. ANOVA Test for the the effect of students GPA on the linguistic and non-linguistic difficulties

Difficulties	variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Linguistic Factors	Between Groups	9.855	3	3.285	7.960	.000
	Within Groups	44.571	108	.413		
	Total	54.426	111			
Non-Linguistic Factors	Between Groups	6.357	3	2.119	4.403	.006
	Within Groups	51.977	108	.481		
	Total	58.334	111			

Regarding the other question of this study as whether the GPA has any effects in the linguistic and non- linguistic difficulties facing the English department students at Prince Sattam bin Abdelaziz University, results as illustrated in (Table.9) shows significant differences in the linguistic and non-linguistic difficulties according to the GPA variable. LSD test findings are shown in (Table. 10) .

Table 10. LSD Test for the the effect of students GPA on the linguistic difficulties

Difficulties	GPA	Mean	Below 2	2 - 2.99	3 - 3.99	4 - 5
Linguistic Factors	Below 2	4.09			.50195*	.79478*
	2 - 2.99	4.01			.41749*	.71033*
	3 - 3.99	3.59				.29283*
	4 - 5	3.30				
Non-Linguistic Factors	Below 2	3.55				.53881*
	2 - 2.99	3.60				.58854*
	3 - 3.99	3.37				.35066*
	4 - 5	3.02				

The linguistic difficulties differences in the GPA are classified as follows:

- Between students whose GPA is (below 2) and those whose GPA is (3 - 3.99) in which the former group had more linguistic difficulties according to their means scores.
- Between students whose GPA is (below 2) and those whose GPA is (4 - 5) in which theformer group had more linguistic difficulties according to their means scores.
- Between students whose GPA is (2 - 2.99) and those whose GPA is (3 - 3.99) in which theformer group had more linguistic difficulties according to their means scores.
- Between students whose GPA is (2- 2.99) and those whose GPA is (4-5) in which theformer group had more linguistic difficulties according to their means scores.
- Between students whose GPA is (3 - 3.99) and those whose GPA is (4 -5) in which theformer group had more linguistic difficulties according to their means scores.

The non-linguistic difficulties differences in GPA are classified as follows:

- Between students whose GPA is (4-5) and those whose GPA is (below 2) , (2-2.99) and (3.3.99) in which the former groups had less non-linguistic difficulties than the other ones according to their means scores.

3.2.5 Other Difficulties

The questionnaire open-ended question “Mention any other difficulties you faced during listening to English lectures” was implemented in case a certain area of difficulty may have been overlooked. Answers are illustrated in the next table. (Table. 11)

Table 11. Participants responses to the open-ended question

Other Difficulties	Frequency
The inability to understand the accent of foreign instructors.	14
Speaking very advanced/ academic English and difficult vocabulary from the beginning till the end of lecture which makes it hard for us to understand.	13
Not using Arabic language to translate and explain difficult concepts.	8
Inappropriate times or too long lectures with no breaks.	7
Not providing summaries or handouts to the lectures.	6
Traditional lecturing without engaging students in the class discussion so they can practice English.	6
Students are demotivated by some instructors' mockery when they make language mistakes in the lecture which turned them into passive listeners.	5
Not considering individual differences amongst students and having high expectation towards the students.	5
Speech speed by some instructors which makes it hard to comprehend or note taking.	2
Not providing adequate information about the course assessment methods or exams.	2
Not allowing using mobile phone in the lecture which help in looking up some information.	1
Difficult materials which are beyond the student level.	1

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study aimed at investigating the English department students' perceptions at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University of the challenges and difficulties that they encounter while listening to academic English lectures. A key finding of this study was that comprehending academic English is a difficult task for the students who are clearly inadequately prepared. The findings has demonstrated that the students are really struggling to comprehend the lectures in various areas. The statistical results for the linguistic problems were at high level whereas the non-linguistic difficulties scored a medium level. Furthermore, despite both the GPA and the level had significant effects in these difficulties but the GPA proved to have the strongest impact on the students' performance.

As illustrated in the results, it was found that the largest proportion complained about the instructors' pronunciation and speed of delivery, the instructors' teaching methods, the course new academic terminology, difficulties in concentrating due to long or late lectures, and problems in participating in the lecture. The rich picture of the students linguistic and non-linguistic difficulties provided in this study has reveal that the students don't have the necessary strategies which could help them process their lectures effectively. Most students complained on not translating what is being said into Arabic. Moreover, they want to be spoon fed rather than to search for the information themselves or to think critically about the lecture content. It is noticeable from the findings that the students are not familiar with the

academic English as they wouldn't comprehend if the speech contained academic terminology which indicates that they lack the necessary strategies to cope with the lectures. They further claimed that they are lost when the instructors don't provide handouts or summaries of the lectures. It is only through constant practice to English that can help the students to fully comprehend the academic English lectures. In addition, it is essential to provide learner strategy training to freshman students so as to enable them to cope with the university life.

Instructors, on the other hand, should adopt new methods and implement more visual aids to facilitate the learning process. As suggested by the participants, instructors should enhance the communication skills with their students by encouraging students' participation, getting their regular feedback, considering individual differences between students. Moreover, they should adjust the speaking speed especially with the freshman level.

In the light of the findings, many implications and recommendations can be put forward. A comparative study could be conducted on the English departments' male counterpart. An exploratory and longitudinal studies are encouraged to thoroughly investigate the difficulties facing the English language students. Furthermore, these difficulties could be examined in other studies through the eyes of the instructors and decision makers in the department. Other studies to suggest solutions for these problems to ensure students' academic improvements are also required.

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Appendix A

(Online Questionnaire)

Dear student,

I am inviting you to participate in my study, entitled 'The English Department Students' Perceptions of the Difficulties in Comprehending Academic English at Prince Sattam bin Abdulaziz University'.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the difficulties facing the undergraduate English majored female students at Prince Sattam bin AbdulAziz University in comprehending academic English. Your participation in this study will involve responding to survey questions which will take less than 10 minutes.

Your participation is anonymous and there are no benefits to you , however the results of this study may be published in a scientific research journals or presented at professional conferences. You may withdraw from this study at anytime without any consequences. If you have questions about this study, please contact me at na.alqahtani@psau.edu.sa

Thank you for your time.

Najla AlQahtani
Lecturer at Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University
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Please read the following statements carefully and indicate your opinion by placing a tick (√) in the appropriate block. People have different opinions, so please keep in mind

that we are interested in your personal opinion. Remember that this is not a test and there are no “right” or “wrong” answers.

A - Personal Information

Level	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8
GPA	below 2	2 - 2.99	3 - 3.99	4 - 5

B - Difficulties in Understanding Academic Lectures in Relation to Linguistic Factors

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1 - I can't understand the lecture if the instructor speaks fast.					
2 - I need the instructor to repeat the information as it gives me more time to process it.					
3- I have difficulty understanding the vocabulary during English lectures.					
4 - I can't understand most of the main points and theories of a lecture.					
5- I don't have enough vocabulary to help me understand academic English.					
6 - I don't have enough vocabulary to help me speak academic English.					
7 - English usage is limited as we do not speak English outside the classroom.					

8 - I find it difficult to understand the instructor's pronunciation.					
9 - I understand the words but not the intended message.					
10- I don't know the right pronunciation of most of the words that I know.					
11 - I know the pronunciation of the word, but I forget what the word means.					
12 - My knowledge of grammar doesn't help me in understanding the lectures.					
13 - When sentences get longer, I lose the meaning of what is said.					
14 - When I listen to a lecture, I can't guess the meaning of new words.					

C - Difficulties in Understanding Academic Lectures in Relation to Non-Linguistic Factors

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
15- I forget what I hear quickly because of so many new information at once.					
16 - The instructor's style in lecturing is de-motivating for the student.					
17 - I find it hard to concentrate when the lecture is late.					
18- I feel shy to ask the instructor during the lecture.					

19- I can't take notes freely during the lecture.					
20- When the instructor talks, she/he doesn't write on the board.					
21 - The instructor doesn't summarize the main points at the end of the lecture.					
22 - The instructor doesn't ask questions during the lecture to check comprehension.					
23- The instructor doesn't give examples to explain the main points of the lecture.					
24- The instructor doesn't allow students to participate in the lecture					
25 - The instructor doesn't give detailed explanation of the lecture content.					

D- Mention any other difficulties you faced during English lectures .

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